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# The Classical Review

EDITORS { E. HARRISON, M.A., Trinity College, Cambridge.  
 C. J. FORDYCE, M.A., 3, The University, Glasgow, W. 2

All correspondence should be addressed to Mr. FORDYCE. Books for review should be sent to the Publisher.

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# The Classical Review

JULY, 1936

## TREES AND PLANTS IN HOMER.

Two different attitudes are commonly taken towards plant life, that of the unscientific amateur who enjoys flowers and trees for their own sake, and that of the scientific botanist who studies their classification, physiology, and the like.

Among the Greeks we find both the amateur and the scientist, but naturally the amateur existed long before the scientist emerged. It was not until the second half of the fourth century B.C. that the Greeks became pioneers in the systematic study of botany, as of so many other sciences. Botany was doubtless allotted its place in the great system of sciences in which the master mind of Aristotle classified all human knowledge as it existed in his day; and though Aristotle did not himself produce a History of Plants as a companion treatise to his work on animals, there are sufficiently numerous references scattered up and down his writings to enable us to form an adequate idea of his doctrine on this subject.<sup>1</sup> There is also in the Aristotelian Corpus a short treatise of great interest, the *de Plantis*,<sup>2</sup> the work not of Aristotle himself but of a somewhat later Peripatetic; it no doubt, however, adequately represents in a brief form the theories which he formed on the physiology of plants and agrees with the doctrine of his acknowledged works. It contains many points of interest; in particular the views ex-

pressed on sex in plants partly anticipate the results of modern research.

The lack of an exhaustive botanic treatise by Aristotle himself was supplied by Theophrastus, his pupil and successor as head of the Peripatetic school; and the fact that Theophrastus' two great works, the *Historia Plantarum* and the *de Causis Plantarum*, have survived has led to the popular idea that Theophrastus was the father of scientific botany—a title which should in all justice be attributed rather to his master Aristotle. The two treatises of Theophrastus not only deal with the physiology of plants, but also describe a great number of individual species, with particular emphasis upon their uses as drugs. It was the work of Theophrastus and his successors which, at the Revival of Learning, formed the starting-point of the modern science of botany.

So much for the work of the Greeks as the founders of scientific botany. Earlier Greek writers, both in verse and in prose, naturally give us an abundance of unscientific information about trees and plants. It would be a fascinating study to trace the extent of botanical knowledge shown by the various Greek authors whose works have survived. Many points of interest would, I think, emerge. For instance, the topic of Hesiod's *Works and Days* naturally leads him to deal with many trees and plants, and he throws some interesting light on the subject of the folk-lore of plants; the History of Herodotus contains a mass of information on what may be called economic botany, the distribution of plants and their practical uses; Hippocrates is chiefly concerned with plants from a pharmacological point of view; Sophocles is obviously more interested in trees and flowers than either Aeschylus or Euripides; lastly, Theocritus could, I think, be shown to have been a true child of the age in which he

<sup>1</sup> Cp. F. Wimmer, *Phytologiae Aristotelicae Fragmenta*: Vratislaviae, typis Grassii, Barthii et Soc., 1838.

<sup>2</sup> The text of this work has had a curious history. The original Greek text was lost, but had been previously translated into Arabic. The Arabic version was translated into Latin by a certain Englishman, by name Alfredus, whose knowledge both of Arabic and of Latin left something to be desired. The Greek text as given in the Berlin Aristotle is a late Byzantine translation from the Latin back again into Greek, and is thus three times removed from the original (see the Oxford translation of Aristotle, vol. vi, Preface to the *de Plantis*).



lived as having a genuinely scientific interest in botany.

The present study, however, is to be limited to Homer, and proposes to examine the references to trees, shrubs and plants which occur in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and to try to draw some conclusions as to the interest in, and the attitude towards, plant life displayed in these poems. Greek philosophers and thinkers sometimes imply that the Homeric poems contain the essentials of all knowledge on such subjects as war and government; but it is to be feared that for botanical study Homer would hardly provide an adequate foundation.

On first consideration, one has the impression that there are abundant references in Homer to trees and plants. Memory recalls a number of similes in which forest trees figure; then there are the descriptions of the gardens of Alcinoüs and of Calypso's Isle; and one recalls the asphodel, the hyacinth, the lotus, and that mysterious plant *moly*. But, as a matter of fact, a systematic search reveals only some fifty-odd botanical names in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. There are nearly three times as many in Virgil,<sup>1</sup> but the topic of the *Georgics* accounts for the majority of them.

To take the trees of Homer first. Their names do not present any very difficult problems; they are for the most part those which are familiar all over Europe.

The oak (*Quercus robur*), the king of the forest, is naturally the most frequently mentioned. That it is the tree *par excellence* is shown by the fact that its name *δρῦς*, like the Sanskrit root *dru-*, was originally a general term for 'wood' or 'tree'; hence a wood-cutter is *δρυτόμος* and a thicket *δρυμός*. The oak figures in a number of similes in the *Iliad*, comparing, for example, the fall of a warrior with the felling of an oak (xiii, 389; xvi, 482), and the din of battle with wind raging through an oak-grove (xiv, 396). The oak figures also in two proverbial expressions (*Il.* xxii, 126; *Od.* xix, 163). Reference is

made in the *Odyssey* (xiv, 327) to the oracular oaks of Dodona. The leaves of the oak were used for fodder and its acorns given to swine, including the companions of Odysseus after they had been turned into swine (*Od.* x, 242).

Another kind of oak is the *φηγός* (*Quercus aesculus*), which derives its name from the root *φay-*, since its fruit is edible. There was a famous specimen of this tree near the Scaean Gate of Troy, where it formed a prominent landmark (*Il.* vi, 237, etc.). The wood of the *φηγός* was used for the axle-trees of chariots. In Latin *fagus* is not an oak but a beech, and our English word beech is etymologically the same as *φηγός*.

The ilex or evergreen oak is not mentioned in Homer, but its acorn *ἄκυλος* occurs (*Od.* x, 242) as a form of fodder.

The ash (*μελίη*) is frequently mentioned as the material used for the shafts of spears. It also occurs in similes, for example (*Il.* xiii, 178):

He tumbled like an ash,  
That on the crest of some conspicuous hill  
Is severed by the axe and bows to earth  
Its tender leaves.<sup>2</sup>

The elm (*πτελέη*) is mentioned in the *Iliad* (xxi, 242) as growing at Troy on the banks of the Scamander, where Achilles clutched at the trunk of an elm and uprooted it, and on the banks of the Xanthus, where elms were consumed by the fire of Hephaestus (*ib.* 350), and at Thebe in the Troad (*Il.* vi, 419).

Two kinds of poplar occur in Homer, the black and the white. The black poplar (*αἴγειρος*) grew in Calypso's island (*Od.* v, 64), on the island off the coast of the Cyclopes (*Od.* ix, 141), in the underworld (*Od.* x, 510), and in Ithaca (*Od.* xvii, 208). One of the most picturesque similes in the *Odyssey* (vii, 106) thus describes women busily working in the house of Alcinoüs:

And others weave at looms or twist the yarn,  
While, like the leaves of a tall poplar, flit  
The glancing shuttles through their fingertips.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The quotations from the *Iliad* are given by kind permission from Sir William Marris' translation (Oxford University Press, 1934).

<sup>3</sup> The quotations from the *Odyssey* are given by kind permission from Dr. J. W. Mackail's translation (Oxford, at the Clarendon Press, 1932).

<sup>1</sup> See John Sargeant, *The Trees, Shrubs and Plants of Virgil*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1920.

Perhaps the species here intended is the *Populus tremula* or aspen-tree, which is proverbial for the fluttering of its leaves.

The white poplar (*ἀχερωΐς*) derives its name from the river of the underworld, whence it was brought by Heracles, whose sacred tree it was. It occurs in two similes in the *Iliad* (xiii, 389; xvi, 482).

The *cornel-tree* (*κράνεια*) is akin to, but much larger than, the English dogwood. It is mentioned with other forest trees in a fine simile in the *Iliad* (xvi, 767):

And as the East wind and the South contend  
Together in the mountain dells to shake  
Deep woods of oak and ash or cornel-trees,  
Smooth-barked, that grind long arms against  
each other  
With eerie noise, and branches crack and snap;  
So Trojans and Achaeans rushed together.

The fruit of the cornel was used as a food for swine (*Od.* x, 242). The Romans used its wood for spear-shafts, but the Homeric warriors seem to have preferred the ash.

The *tamarisk* (*μυρίκη*) grew freely in the neighbourhood of Troy. It was under a tamarisk that Diomedes hid the captured arms of Dolon and piled some of its branches and reeds over them (*Il.* x, 466), and it was upon a tamarisk stump that the horses of Adrastus stumbled and threw their master, who was captured by Menelaus (*Il.* vi, 39).

The *willow* (*ιτέν*, *Salix alba*) grew in the plain of Troy (*Il.* xxi, 350) and in the underworld (*Od.* x, 510). Closely akin to it is the *chaste-tree* (*λῦγος*, *Agnus castus*), whose twigs were used for tying the sheep of the Cyclops together (*Od.* ix, 427), and the legs of the stag shot by Odysseus on his arrival in the island of Circe (*Od.* x, 166), and by Achilles for tying up the two sons of Priam whom he caught while they were tending their flocks on Mount Ida (*Il.* xi, 105). *Osiers* (*οἰσύναι ῥίπες*), probably branches of the *Salix viminalis*, were used by Odysseus for binding together the raft on which he left the island of Calypso (*Od.* v, 256).

The *silver fir* (*ἐλάτη*, *Abies*), to which Homer gives the epithet 'high as heaven', is the tallest of all the forest

trees, often growing to a height of a hundred feet. It occurs in a simile describing a fallen warrior (*Il.* v, 560), but the word was more often used as a synonym for an oar, for which its light, tough wood was a suitable material.

Two words occur for the *pine-tree*, *πέυκη* and *πίτυς*: they are probably the Corsican and Aleppo varieties. *πέυκη* occurs in a fine simile in the *Iliad* (xi, 494):

As when  
Sweeps down upon the plain out of the hills  
A winter torrent, swollen with the rain  
Of Zeus, and many a dead oak, many a pine,  
It bears along, and casts a mass of drift  
Out to the sea; so glorious Ajax scoured  
The plain, resistless, cleaving horse and man.

It was a stump of *πέυκη* which served as a turning-post in the chariot race at the funeral games of Patroclus (*Il.* xxiii, 328). *πίτυς* was used as a material for ships (*Il.* xiii, 390), and for the fence of the courtyard outside the Cyclops' cave (*Od.* ix, 186).

The *alder* (*κλήθρη*) occurs only in the description of Calypso's island (*Od.* v, 64); this is also the only passage in which the *cypress* is mentioned as growing, though its wood was used for the construction of Odysseus' palace in Ithaca (*Od.* xvii, 340).

The wood of the *cedar* (*κέδρος*)—which is not the cedar of Lebanon but the prickly cedar, *Juniperus oxycedrus*—was burnt as a fragrant fuel in the house of Calypso (*Od.* v, 60); and the adjective *κέδρινος* is used of the inner store-chamber of Priam's palace, which was doubtless lined with this material (*Il.* xxiv, 192).

The *plane-tree* (*πλατάνιστος*) is only once mentioned in Homer. It was under a plane-tree at Aulis that the Greeks sacrificed on their way to Troy (*Il.* ii, 307):

There on the holy altars round the spring  
We paid the gods choice hecatombs, beneath  
A lovely plane-tree, whence bright water ran.

It is curious that the plane-tree is not more frequently mentioned in Homer. With its widespread shade and the water which generally springs near it, it is one of the trees which travellers in Greece and Asia Minor find most welcome and remember best. It is a very long-lived tree, and there is a

specimen of colossal size and great age still shown in the island of Cos as that under which Hippocrates used to sit.

The *bay-tree* (δάφνη) is only once mentioned in Homer, where it overshadows the entrance to the cave of the Cyclops (*Od.* ix, 183). Apparently it was not yet sacred to Apollo, as it is in the Homeric Hymn to that god.

The fruit-trees of Homer are the *apple, pear, fig, olive, vine* and *pomegranate*. They are always mentioned in connexion with their fruits, except that the wood of the olive is spoken of as used for the handle of an axe (*Il.* xiii, 612; *Od.* v, 236). The most elaborate account of fruit-trees occurs in the famous description of the garden of Alcinoüs (*Od.* vii, 115 ff.). Another list is given in the account of the temptation of Tantalus in the *Néκυια* (*Od.* xi, 588 ff.). Again, in the recognition scene between Odysseus and Laertes, the former finally convinces his father that he is indeed his son by reminding him how, when he was a child, Laertes had allowed him to call his own ten apple-trees, thirteen pear-trees, forty fig-trees and fifty rows of vines (*Od.* xxiv, 340 ff.).

The *wild forms* of the *fig* (ἐρινεύς), *pear* (ἄχερδος) and *olive* (φυλή) also occur in Homer. The wild fig gave its name to a hill near Troy on which there was a watch-tower (*Il.* xxii, 145), and it was to a wild fig-tree overhanging Charybdis that Odysseus clung and saved himself from destruction (*Od.* xii, 103). The wild pear was used for hedging round the hut of Eumæus (*Od.* xiv, 10); and it was between two thickets, one of wild olives and the other of cultivated olives, that Odysseus rested after he had been cast ashore on the land of the Phaeacians (*Od.* v, 477).

The *date-palm* (φοῖνιξ) is only mentioned once in Homer, where Odysseus compares Nausicaa to this tree (*Od.* vi, 163):

Once on a time indeed a young palm-tree  
In Delos by Apollo's sanctuary  
Upspringing thus I saw—for thither too  
I voyaged and much people followed me,

When on that journey evil-starred I went  
That brought me woe—and in astonishment  
Long gazed I on it; for in all the world  
No shaft so stately up from earth is sent.

As its name shows, the date-palm was an importation from the East and clearly a rarity in Homeric times, since Odysseus implies that he had never seen it except at Delos, which he visited on his way to Troy. It was at Delos that the sacred palm-tree grew under which Leto gave birth to Apollo and Artemis and which was afterwards commemorated by a bronze palm-tree standing in the sacred enclosure at Delos in historical times. There is no mention earlier than Herodotus of the use of dates as an article of food. Date-palms produce no fruit in the latitudes of Greece and Asia Minor.

The *bramble* (βάτος, *Rubus ulmifolius*) occurs once in the *Odyssey* (xxiv, 230), where Laertes wears gloves to protect himself from its thorns.

So much for trees and shrubs, which form the largest class in the Homeric flora. The flowering plants are much less numerous.

The *rose* does not occur in Homer, except in such compound adjectives as *ροδοδάκτυλος*. The same is true of the *lily* (λείριον), which only occurs in the adjective *λειριόεις*, which is used twice in the *Iliad*, once as an epithet of the cry of the grasshopper (*Il.* iii, 152) and once as an epithet of human flesh (*Il.* xiii, 830). In both passages the adjective seems to mean 'delicate', 'tender'.

The *poppy* (μήκων), as a garden flower, occurs in a simile (*Il.* viii, 306):

And he dropped  
His head aslant, like poppy in a garden,  
Laden with seed and with the rains of spring.

The *crocus*—the *Crocus sativus*, a purple variety of which the yellow stigmata supply a dye—occurs in epithets such as *κροκόπεπλος* used of the dawn, and once in the *Iliad* (xiv, 348), where the earth made a couch of flowers spring up for Zeus and Hera:

Beneath them earth divine  
Made fresh, new grass to grow and dewy lotus  
And crocus and thick, tender hyacinth.

The *lotus* has several different meanings in Greek which have nothing in common except the name. In the passage just quoted it is used of a leguminous plant, identical with, or



closely akin to, the common *Lotus corniculatus* or bird's-foot trefoil; it was a favourite fodder for Homeric horses. Secondly, it is used of the fruit eaten by the Lotus-eaters (*Od.* ix, 84); this is the *Zizyphus lotus* or jujube-tree of Northern Africa. Herodotus (iv, 177) tells us that its fruit is the size of a lentisk-berry and in sweetness resembles the date, and that a kind of wine could be made from it. It is common in the oases of the African desert and has been acclimatized in the French Riviera. (Two other kinds of lotus occur in the classics, the *Nymphaea lotus*, or Nile water-lily, and the nettle-tree (*Celtis Australis*), the stems of which were used as pipes; hence *λωτός* is often used as a synonym for a flute.)

The *hyacinth* is mentioned as a growing plant in the passage already quoted about the couch of Zeus and Hera. It also occurs twice in the *Odyssey* (vi, 231; xxiii, 158), where Athena makes the hair of Odysseus grow thick and curly 'like the flower of the hyacinth'. The latter use seems to point to the hyacinth as we know it, to which dark, curling hair might well be compared. It must, however, have been some smaller and softer plant upon which Zeus and Hera reclined, possibly the squill or grape-hyacinth. The 'lettered hyacinth', so often mentioned in Greek literature and connected with the legends of the deaths of Ajax and Hyacinthus, in whose memory it was inscribed with the letters AI or YA, may perhaps be some kind of lily, such as the Martagon lily, or some species of corn-flag,<sup>1</sup> both of which have markings which might, with a little imagination, be recognized as letters. The word hyacinth is probably one of the oldest as well as the most beautiful of plant-names. The termination *-ωνθος*, which is not Indo-European, occurs in a number of words, such as *ἀσάμυνθος* and *λαβύρινθος*, and in place-names, and it has been conjectured that they are survivals from the language of the pre-Greek inhabitants of the Greek lands. (It has also been suggested that words ending in *-ισσος*, as in *νάρκισσος*—which occurs in the Homeric Hymn

to Demeter, but not in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*—belong to another group of the same origin.)

The *violet* (*ἴον*) occurs in epithets such as *ἰοειδής*, used of the sea, and is once described (*Od.* v, 72) as growing in a meadow. It is coupled here with *σέλινον*, which is generally translated *parsley*, but is probably the *Apium graveolens*, of which our celery is a cultivated form. It is mentioned as food for horses both in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and was used for crowns of victory in the Isthmian games.

*Asphodel* is only mentioned in Homer as growing in the meadows of the land of the departed (*Od.* xi, 539; xxiv, 13). It belongs to the lily tribe, and several varieties grow in Southern Europe. Perhaps the most attractive thing about it is its name. The flower is not unpicturesque, consisting of numerous small amber-coloured blossoms, but, after it has flowered in the spring, its foliage quickly becomes ragged and untidy. It is still regarded by modern Greeks as a flower connected with the dead and is often placed on tombs. Our word daffodil, of which the earlier form was affodil, is derived from it.

*ἄκανθα*, the generic name for the *thistle*, occurs in a delightful simile in the *Odyssey* (v, 328) descriptive of the drifting of Odysseus' raft:

While the raft helpless on the tideway spun,  
As down the plain, when Autumn is begun,  
Before the North-wind tufts of thistle-down.

Lastly, we come to that mysterious plant *moly*, which Hermes recommended to Odysseus as an antidote to Circe's spells (*Od.* x, 304):

Black was its root, the blossom milky white,  
And the gods call it moly; mortal wight  
Would have hard work to dig it from the ground;  
Howbeit the power of gods is infinite.

Etymologically the word is identical with the Sanskrit *mulam*, 'root'. In Homer it is probably an entirely fabulous plant, but in later writers it means garlic. Garlic is never mentioned in Homer, from which we may perhaps conclude that in his day one did not have to suffer from the fumes of garlic which often give an unpleasant aroma to the exhalations of modern Greeks.

The *onion* (*κρόμμυον*), however, was

<sup>1</sup> J. Sargeant, *op. cit.* pp. 59, 60.

not lacking, and occurs both in the *Iliad* (xi, 630) and in the *Odyssey* (xix, 233). In the latter passage it is used for a curious comparison:

The brodered shirt that glistened next his skin  
Was close and smooth as a dried onion's coat;  
So sleek it was and shining like a sun.

This is a very picturesque way of describing the delicate sheen of the material. In the passage from the *Iliad* onions are taken as a relish before the drinking of wine.

The bean (κύαμος) and the chick-pea (ἐρέβινθος) both occur only once in Homer in a simile in the *Iliad* (xiii, 589):

And as in some great threshing-floor go leaping  
From a broad pan the black-skinned beans or peas,  
As the wind whistles and the winnowers fans;  
So from the plate of glorious Menelaus  
The biting arrows glanced and sped afar.

So much for flowers and vegetables. Of the cereals, barley (κρίθη, κῆ, ἄλφιτον) is very frequently mentioned in both epics. It was ground in a hand-mill to form a meal or coarse powder, which was used both for bread and for a sort of porridge: it was also sprinkled on the heads of victims for sacrifice. Wheat (πυρός) was almost certainly first cultivated in the Nile valley, where its discovery was attributed to Osiris. It is frequently mentioned both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey* and figures with barley in a striking simile (*Il.* xi, 69):

As lines of reapers working towards each other  
Drive swathes along a rich man's field of wheat  
Or barley, and the handfuls fall in heaps;  
So Greeks and Trojans leapt at one another  
And slew, and neither dreamed of deadly flight.

ξεία and ὄλυρα, which often occur as the fodder of horses, are probably both varieties of the one-seeded wheat (*Triticum monococcum*).

Grass in Homer has the generic name of ποίη, found frequently in both epics; the only distinct species of gramineous plant (except the cereals) mentioned in Homer is the honey-sweet dog's-tooth grass (ἄγρωστις), on which the mules of Nausicaa fed while she was dealing with the washing (*Od.* vi, 90). It is one of the commonest grasses of Southern Europe and is found occasionally in this country.

The list of Homeric plants terminates

with the rushes and reeds. δόναξ, the pole-reed, was used for the shafts of arrows; σχοῖνος is probably the bull-rush, and θρόνον a generic term for a rush; κύπειρον, galingale, is mentioned as a food for horses (*Il.* xxi, 351; *Od.* iv, 603). Another of the cyperaceae, the papyrus, occurs in Homer only in its adjectival form βύβλινος as an epithet of ropes twisted out of this material (*Od.* xxi, 391). As papyrus does not grow in Greece or Asia Minor (though it can still be seen growing near Syracuse) the reference implies commerce with Egypt. Herodotus tells us that ropes of papyrus were used by the Persians for bridging the river Strymon.

So much for the trees and plants mentioned in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. This enumeration seemed necessary if any conclusions were to be drawn.

It is one of the charms of Homer that he is never learned, he never tries to make a show of erudition; he left that to his successors, the writers of literary epics. He tells us just enough to enable us to imagine the environment in which his characters play their parts; the background is sketched in with a few masterly strokes rather than with detailed painting. His interest is in man rather than in nature. Such observation as he shows is displayed not in the description of actual scenes but in similes used to illustrate the actions of his heroes.

In wild nature as such Homer shows no particular delight. Mountains and the torrents which flow from them are to be feared rather than admired, and none of the flowers which he mentions are mountain flowers; they all belong to the low-lying meadows and marshes and to gardens. Odysseus is almost apologetic when he speaks of the wildness of Ithaca, which is bare and rocky, fit only for the feeding of goats, a rough land but a nurse of heroes. He loves it because it is his home, not because he admires its savageness and wildness.

Again, trees and plants are usually mentioned not for their own sake but in connexion with their usefulness to man, whether as food for himself or his animals, or for building his houses or for making his weapons, ships and

vehicles. This practical point of view is often insisted upon, even in similes. For example a warrior falls (*Il.* xiii, 389),

As falls the oak or poplar or tall pine,  
That carpenters with whetted axes fell  
Upon the hills for a ship's ribs.

And again (*Il.* iv, 482):

And in the dust he fell to earth, as falls  
A poplar-tree grown in the bottom-land  
Of a great marsh—its stem is smooth, its top  
Breaks into branches—which a wainwright hath  
Hewn with his gleaming iron, that he may make  
A felloe for some sumptuous car; and there  
It lies and seasons by the river banks.

Ruskin remarks that 'without an exception, every Homeric landscape, intended to be beautiful, is composed of a fountain, a meadow and a shady grove'. This, I think, is very true. The description of Calypso's abode is characteristic (*Od.* v, 63):

But round the cave a verdurous forest sprang  
Of poplars, and sweet-scented cypresses,  
And alders; and long-pinioned birds in these  
Nestled, owls, falcons, chattering cormorants,  
And all that ply their business in the seas.  
But round the hollow cavern trailing went  
A garden-vine with heavy clusters bent;  
And rising all arow, four springs abroad  
This way and that their shining water sent.  
And on both sides fair-flowering meads were  
set,  
Soft-clad with parsley and with violet.  
Even an immortal, if he came, that sight  
Marvelling might view and joy thereof might  
get.

Similar is the description of the grove where Odysseus is told by Nausicaa to wait before he follows her into the city (*Od.* vi, 291):

You will light upon  
Athena's goodly grove of poplar trees  
By the roadside: therein a spring wells out  
In a rich meadow, as far off the town  
As a man's voice will carry if he shout.

In his description of the gardens of Alcinoüs Homer is evidently giving a picture of what he regards as the ideal setting for the palace of a heroic king (*Od.* vii, 114):

And there grow fruit-trees flourishing and  
great:

Pear-trees and pomegranates, and apple-trees  
Laden with shining apples, and by these,  
Sweet-juiced figs and olives burgeoning,  
Whose fruiting ceases not nor perishes  
Winter or summer, all the year; for there

The western breezes ever soft and fair  
Ripen one crop and bring another on.  
Apple on apple growing, pear on pear,  
Grape-bunch on grape-bunch, fig on fig they  
lie

Mellowing to age: and trenched deep thereby  
The many-fruited vineyard of the King  
Is set: one side of it lies warm and dry,  
Where raisins in the parching sun are spread,  
And here they gather grapes, and there they  
tread  
The vintage in the wine-press; while in front  
The clusters newly-set their blossom shed.

The chief ideas contained in this passage are fruitfulness, orderliness and symmetry—nature subservient to the purposes of man. But besides an orchard and vineyard, Alcinoüs has a flower-garden:

There likewise, by the vineyard's utmost row,  
Are set trim garden beds<sup>1</sup> of every sort,  
Full-flowering while the seasons come and go.

It is obvious that Homer likes best to describe a well-ordered landscape and a well-ordered garden. In fact, I think we may say that his attitude towards plant-life is that of the gardener rather than the lover of wild nature, and he attributes the same ideas to his characters. In the *Iliad*, when Thetis is lamenting over the early death which is to be Achilles' lot, she speaks of his childhood and says that she nurtured him 'like a plant in a rich garden plot' (*Il.* xviii, 57). This is Homer's idea of a well-regulated infancy.

And again, in the *Odyssey*, what is Laertes doing when the long-lost Odysseus comes to make himself known to him? He is gardening, in his oldest clothes (*Od.* xxiv, 226):

And there he found  
His father in the well-tilled close alone,  
Digging about a sapling; and the shirt  
He wore was patched and mean and foul with  
dirt,  
And round his legs were clouted gaiters wound  
Of ox-hide, lest the thorns might do them hurt,  
And his hands gloved against the briars that  
tore,  
And on his head a goat-skin cap he wore.

And how does Odysseus address his father, whom he has not seen for so

<sup>1</sup> The word used is *παρσίαι*, which is also used in the New Testament in a picturesque phrase, where, at the feeding of the five thousand, the people sat down *παρσίαι παρσίαι*, 'group by group' like well-arranged flower beds (Mark vi, 40).

many years? He begins by congratulating him on the tidiness of his garden:

O aged man, no lack of skill you show  
In orchard-keeping, but well-tended grow  
All the trees here within the garden set,  
Olive and vine and fig and pear arbor,  
And truly trimmed is every garden plot.

Only a garden-lover, I think, would have placed this scene in a garden and treated it just in that way.

In conclusion, I think we may say

that Homer's attitude toward plant-life is never romantic, never scientific—it is practical. For him Nature, duly tamed and arranged, provides an ideal background for man's more peaceful activities and produces what he needs for his sustenance, his comfort and his delight.

EDWARD S. FORSTER.

University of Sheffield.

### Δίκη AND Τῆρις IN AESCHYLUS' SUPPLIANTS.

THE *Suppliants* is an unsatisfactory play for study in that it raises many questions without providing us with the means of answering them fully. Thus, while action and characterization are simple and even rudimentary, a problem is raised even here by inconsistencies which have been detected in the portrayal of the character of the suppliant maidens themselves.<sup>1</sup> In the sphere of thought, problems multiply, owing perhaps to the fact that this, the first play of the trilogy, is used to suggest ideas and problems which are to be more definitely formulated and more fully developed later. Hence we find a great diversity of opinion among modern critics as to what is the central issue in the play. By various writers this has been said to be the law about consanguineous marriages, the right of women to refuse marriage, the law relating to heiresses, the protection of suppliants, the preservation of a right of asylum, the conflict of Greek and barbarian, and the conflict of male and female. It is not denied that all these ideas may have their place in the play and contribute in some degree to the heightening of the dramatic conflict. The difficulty is to determine what is the central problem and what are merely minor themes.

Among the recurrent ideas which are woven into the play there are two, *δίκη* and *τῆρις*, which appear to receive the greatest emphasis, so much so that it would seem that the poet used the simple ancient legend as a means of

dramatizing the conflict between these two opposing principles. In the case of *δίκη* he is dealing with an idea of many applications. It is at once the guiding principle of the universe, upheld and followed by the supreme god, and the bond which holds society together, restrains lawless self-assertiveness, and makes civilized human life possible.<sup>2</sup> Again *δίκη*, as manifested among men, includes the broadest principles of equity and the principles underlying the most detailed provisions of statute law. In the *Suppliants* Aeschylus' interest in abstract justice is reflected in frequent references to technical legal matters and in the use of a number of technical or half-technical legal terms, either unchanged or in the form of poetic variants.<sup>3</sup> Nothing is too technical for

<sup>1</sup> Cf. R. Hirzel, *Themis, Dike und Verwandeltes*, 104-106, 157-166, 178, 210-225.

<sup>2</sup> 5. *φείγομεν*, in both the literal sense of 'flee' and the secondary sense of 'be in exile.'

7. *γνωσθεῖσαν*, the simple verb instead of *καταγινώσκω*, as in *I.G.* I<sup>2</sup> 10. 29. 172. *γόνυ* (= *φύσει*), a legal term. Cf. *Lys.* 13. 91. 229. *φύγη ματαίων αἰτίας*. If the correction *ματαίων* is sound, we appear to have a poetic variant of *ἐνέχεσθαι αἰτίας* or *ἀπολύεσθαι αἰτίων*. 233. *πῶρος*, poetic for *πῶγμα* in the sense of 'case.' 239. *ἀπρόξενοι*, obviously in its technical sense, although this involves an anachronism. 314. *ῥυσίων*, 'restitution,' 'deliverance' (Liddell and Scott). There may also be a hint of the legal implications of the word, the gesture of touching involving an assertion of proprietorship. Cf. *Vürtheim, op. cit.*, 38-39. 383-384. A suggestion of the institution of *δικαὶ ἀπὸ συμβόλων*. 388. *ἐγγύτητα γένους*, a legal phrase; cf. *Isaeus* 10. 5. 390. *φείγειν*, 'urge in your defence.' 391. *κύριος*, the authority of a legal κύριος. 412. *ῥυσίων*, property seized in distraint. 435-6. *ἐκτίνειν θέμιν*, equivalent to the prosaic *διδόναι δίκην*. 472. *ἐκπράξω χρέος*, exact payment of a debt. 517. *λαοὺς συγκαλῶν*, a suggestion of

<sup>1</sup> U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Aischylos: Interpretationen*, 11; J. Vürtheim, *Aischylos' Schutzfliehende*, 183.

our poet, but it is the sanctity, rather than the minute technicality, of laws which impresses him. Indeed it is a misnomer to speak of technicalities in an age when law was a common possession of the whole citizen body and not a matter reserved for professional lawyers and remote from the life and interests of the common man. When later the *Oresteia* ended with a scene in a great court of Athens, Aeschylus and his audience would be conscious of no incongruity or anticlimax. "Ἔβρις, or lawless violence and self-assertiveness, is the principle opposed to δίκη,<sup>1</sup> and in the play is typified by the Egyptian suitors, as δίκη is typified by the Danaids.

The action of the play is exceedingly simple in its main outline, and derives complexity and meaning from the

variety and importance of the aspects of δίκη which it touches upon, and from the minor elements of conflict which the poet relates to the opposition of δίκη and ἔβρις.

When the drama begins, the chorus of Danaids first offer a prayer to Zeus, the protector of suppliants; they are not outlaws condemned for murder, but are fleeing from their kinsmen and suitors. They have taken refuge in Argos because of their descent from Io, which gives them a claim to protection. They pray that the elements may overwhelm their suitors before they force them into marriages ὧν θέμις εἶργει (37). Io is again recalled, with her son Epaphus. The gods of their race are invoked to heed justice and abhor ἔβρις, to be righteous towards wedlock. They invoke again the power of Zeus, inscrutable and omnipotent; let him look upon mortals' insolence, such as that of the suitors. The land of Apia and Artemis are invoked to bring deliverance. The maidens again invoke Zeus, and, becoming bolder, urge that he will have no just plea in his defence if he refuses to help descendants of Io.

Danaos now admonishes his daughters, counselling prudence (178). He has seen signs of an approaching throng, and tells them to take refuge at the near-by altars and address the strangers as suppliants. Above all, he reminds them, they must be prudent and modest, as befits strangers. The dramatic purpose of this apparently unnecessary emphasis is to make clear to the audience the contrast between the suppliants and their insolent suitors.<sup>2</sup> He now instructs his daughters to seat themselves as suppliants to the gods, like doves pursued by hawks. 'Shall bird prey on bird and be pure? And how shall one be pure that takes from an unwilling father an unwilling bride?'

<sup>2</sup> The idea that the Danaids are warlike, man-hating amazons has little basis in the text of the play and is derived from other sources of somewhat doubtful implication. Cf. Anna Elisei, 'Le Danaïdi nelle Supplici di Eschilo,' *Stud. Ital. di Filol. Class.* VI (1928), 197-219; M. P. Nilsson, *Mycenean Origins of Greek Religion*, 66; G. A. Megas, 'Die Sage von Danaos und den Danaiden,' *Hermes* LXVIII (1933), 422.

the technical σύγκλητος ἐκκλησία. 598-9. See page 106. 601. παντὲς is used in the sense of κύρια, valid. 604. The reading is very uncertain, but there is probably a reminiscence of the technical χειροτονέω. 605-14. These lines contain a poetical paraphrase of the language of Athenian decrees. Cf. Wilamowitz, *op. cit.*, 12. 622. ἀνευ κλητῆρος. The scholiast interprets this as meaning that they showed their hands before a vote was called for. 701-3. εὐξυμβόλους δίκας is suggestive of the technical phrase δίκαι ἀπὸ συμβόλων. δίκας διδοίεν: here in the sense of 'permit legal action,' 'grant the right to use the courts.' 726. ξυνδικούς, a suggestion of the public advocates at Athens. 728. ἀγεὺς θέλοντες ῥυσίῳ ἐφάπτορες: a reference to the primitive practice of self-help. Cf. R. J. Bonner and G. Smith, *The Administration of Justice from Homer to Aristotle*, 11-15. 732. κυρίῳ τ' ἐν ἡμέρᾳ in this context carries a suggestion of 'the appointed day of trial.' 733. δώσει δίκην has a legal flavour. 919. A reference to the well-known practice of requiring foreigners to be represented by citizens in legal proceedings. 932. ἀφαιρεθεὶς is used in its legal sense of 'robbed,' 'deprived of one's property.' 935-6. τὸ νείκος δ' οὐκ ἐν ἀργύρῳ λαβῇ ἔλυσεν is poetic for τὸ ἐγκλημα οὐ χρημάτων λήψει διέλυσεν. 942-3. δημόπρακτος ἐκ πόλεως μία ψήφος ἐκρανται is an elaboration of the formula ἔδοξε τῷ δήμῳ. 963. προστάτης δ' ἐγώ: a reminiscence of Athenian law which required that a metic should have a προστάτης as his legal representative. 1071-2. καὶ δίκαι δίκας ἔπεισθαι: δίκας appears to be used in the sense of 'causes,' or 'claims of right,' somewhat as in *Iliad* XVIII. 508 and XXIII. 542, for which see Bonner and Smith, *op. cit.*, 32, 39. The juxtaposition of δίκαι δίκας serves to emphasize the contrast between men's conflicting claims and the universal principle of justice.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hirzel, *op. cit.*, 131, n. 1, 166.



(226-227). He shall not escape arraignment for outrage even in the house of Hades, for there another Zeus sits in judgment.

The King of Argos enters and questions the newcomers. They inform him that they are of Argive race descended from Io, whose story they recount in detail. The purpose of this is to establish their claim to protection and to prepare for their appeal for help. They now inform him that they are fleeing from their suitors, and he asks, 'By reason of hatred or unlawfulness?' (336). They reply by asking, 'Who would object<sup>1</sup> to masters that they loved?' That is, they loathe the suitors, and imply that their suit violates the principle that their father has proclaimed (226-227). The king objects that war may result, but is assured that Justice protects her allies, and the scene ends with a reminder of the wrath of Zeus Hikesios. The issue presented to the king is plain. Is Justice to be upheld?

But the king is not yet won over, and the following chorus presents another aspect of the problem. To repeated appeals, in which the theme of justice recurs again and again, the king answers in effect that he must consider the welfare and safety of his people. Two passages in this part of the play are of particular interest. In one the king suggests that if the suitors are urging a legal claim it is open to the Danaids to plead that it is invalid.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reading *ἄνευ* in 337.

<sup>2</sup> 387-391. One of the most troublesome problems in the play turns upon the question of the legal rights of the suitors and the status of the Danaids as *ἐπικληροί*. The Athenian law regarding this does not appear to be relevant, inasmuch as their father is still living. E. Meyer, *Forsch. zur alt. Gesch.*, I. 83, suggests that in an earlier version of the story Danaus was already dead. This would explain the inconsistency, though hardly justifying it; but the suggestion has rightly been rejected by later critics. Why then does Aeschylus refer to the matter at all when it appears to be irrelevant? There might appear to be a suggestion that, while the suitors come very near to having a legal claim, such a situation gives them no real status and to press such claims is presumptuous and unjust. But the phrases *νόμῳ πῶλεως* (388) and *κατὰ νόμους τοὺς οἰκοθεν* (390) show that the king is obviously not thinking of the law of Solon; rather he is thinking

The latter, instead of replying to the suggestion, merely renew their protestations. This looks like evasion, but they undoubtedly feel that they are dealing with men who do not regard law or justice. Their reply is not logical, but is perfectly natural in the circumstances. There is also a strangely anachronistic passage in which the king asserts that he is not an absolute ruler, but must consult the people. This may be introduced for the dramatic purpose of causing delay and creating suspense or possibly for another reason to be referred to later. While the king is practically won over by a final appeal to *τάδε δίκαια Διόθεν κράτη* (437), it still remains to consult the people. Danaus is sent to win their support and the king follows shortly to convene the assembly.

In the following ode the chorus again pray for the protection of Zeus, who is reminded of their descent from Io. Their claim upon Zeus is analogous to their claim upon Argos in that it is based upon the double grounds of their character of suppliants and the bonds of connection inherited from Io. The recurring references to Io would appear to be due to this fact, although this mythological material is developed and expanded on a scale that is out of proportion to its dramatic relevance. However, this frequently happens with subjects that lend themselves to poetic treatment and have an appeal of their own to the poet and his audience. The ode ends with a solemn assertion of the

of the possibility that Egyptian law may give the suitors a lawful claim. It is known that the term *ἐπικληρος* might be used of an heiress in the lifetime of her father (see Pollux, III. 33; Ar., *Birds*, 1652) and that the laws about heiresses varied in different places (cf. Daremberg and Saglio, *s.v. ἐπικληρος*); hence it is not unreasonable to suppose that in some cases the principle of Solon's legislation may have been carried further and there may have been provisions forbidding the marriage of an heiress to any but her next of kin even during the lifetime of her father. This would appear to be at least as reasonable as a system that allowed her to contract a marriage when there was no prospect of its being permanent. It is the possibility of there being some such law which troubles the king. The purpose of Aeschylus in introducing this aspect of the situation is to suggest that *δίκη* demands, among other things, careful consideration of the terms of statute law.

majesty and power of Zeus. Most significant are the concluding words,

πάρεστι δ' ἔργον ὡς ἔπος  
σπεύσαι τε τῶν βούλιος φέρεי φρήν. (598-599)

These terms might be applicable to two of the functions of human government.<sup>1</sup> Thus Aeschylus suggests the parallelism between divine and earthly government and justice as manifestations of the same principle. Here and elsewhere it is implied that the rule of Zeus, in many ways inscrutable, is based upon principles analogous to those that guide human conduct, while human justice is a copy of the heavenly pattern; thus, without robbing Zeus of his majesty, the poet makes his rule intelligible.

In the short scene which follows we are brought back to earth. Danaus returns, announces that the decision of the assembly has been favourable, and quotes the terms of their resolution in words which we recognize as being a metrical adaptation of the formulas of a contemporary Athenian decree granting *μετοικία*, penalties and all (609-614). To us it may appear to be a grotesque *tour de force*. To Aeschylus it might well appear justified, as setting forth a practical application of the principle of *δίκη* and teaching a lesson in international justice. In scarcely any sphere had the progress of civilization brought greater amelioration from the conditions of primitive Greece than in this matter of providing protection for strangers from abroad. Such decrees as this were the counterpart of the law of Zeus Xenios, as Aeschylus practically tells us when he makes Danaus end his speech with the words *Zeus δ' ἐπέκρανεν τέλος* (624). There is perhaps a further justification for the political ideas which Aeschylus introduces here and elsewhere in defiance of historical accuracy and literary congruity. The introduction of a decree of a democratic assembly and the previous passage in which the king corrects the Danaids when they assume that he is an absolute ruler are not to be regarded as dramatic irrelevances, calculated to appeal to an Athenian audi-

ence with its enthusiasm for democracy and its supersensitiveness on the subject of tyranny. They are dramatically appropriate if we consider that tyranny is the rule of *ὑβρις*, while constitutional monarchy, a near relative of democracy, is the rule of law and justice. The king, then, is not the conventional tyrant, but a ruler who may be expected to uphold *δίκη*.

In the following stasimon the chorus invoke upon their benefactors the blessing of the gods, and above all of Zeus Xenios. To prayers for the peace and prosperity of Argos they add petitions that the state may be blessed with good government and a regard for justice. The lesson of this ode is that happiness is to be won by regard to Zeus and justice. It ends significantly upon the note of *δίκη*.

Danaus now catches sight of the suitors' ship approaching, and in impassioned dochmiacs his daughters give utterance to their fear and loathing. The suitors have never been far from our thoughts, since they are the cause of everything that has happened and there have been repeated references to their one conspicuous quality, their *ὑβρις*.<sup>2</sup> This recurring emphasis has served to make clear the motives of the chorus,<sup>3</sup> and by focussing attention

<sup>1</sup> This, or its synonyms, is referred to in lines 9, 30, 81, 104, 225, 426, 487, 511, 528, 741-742, 750-752, 757-759, 762-763, 789, 798-799, 817, 845, 880-881, 911.

<sup>2</sup> The attitude of the Danaids to their cousins has been variously explained. Gilbert Murray (*The Suppliant Women*, 18-27) sees in the play a dramatic treatment of the problem of combining the sacredness of virginity with the acceptance of marriage, basing his view largely upon the presumed contents of the two lost plays and an allegorizing of the Io myth. But if Aeschylus wished to present dramatically the case for the institution of marriage, the suitors appear to be singularly ill chosen for the purpose. The contrast in the play is rather between civilized marriage based on *δίκη* and primitive forced marriage.

G. Megas (*op. cit.*, 422), in dealing with the myth in general rather than with Aeschylus' play, observes that the quarrel between the Danaids' father and uncle would be sufficient to explain their aversion. While this is true of some versions of the story, the impression conveyed by Aeschylus is that the Danaids hate their cousins for reasons of their own and that their father is a relatively subordinate character. Wilamowitz (*op. cit.*, 15) argued that the aver-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. Headlam, *The Plays of Aeschylus*, 135, n. 5.

upon the opposition of *δίκη* and *ὑβρις* has given added meaning to the crisis of the play when the Argives made their choice, not only between the Danaids and their suitors, but also between *δίκη* and *ὑβρις*. There has also been some emphasis laid upon the kinship of the suitors,<sup>1</sup> but to a lesser degree, and it is reasonable to suppose that its only significance lies in the fact that their relationship would constitute an aggravation of their *ὑβρις*.<sup>2</sup>

sion proceeded from 'angeborene Männerfeindschaft.' But the reading *αὐτογενεὶ φυξανορῆα* (8) is conjectural and its interpretation is debatable. It might well be argued that *αὐτογενεὶ* means 'of the same race' and modifies the second part of the compound noun. (Cf. Elisei, *loc. cit.*, who points out further that *ἄνδρες* and *ἄρσενες*, as frequently used in the play, mean the sons of Aegyptus, not the whole sex.) Murray (*op. cit.*, 17) suggests that apparent expressions of aversion to all marriage really mean merely that the Danaids loathe marriage with the suitors, an exaggeration natural under the circumstances. Wilamowitz also postulates an armed encounter in which the suitors had been victorious and hence claimed their cousins as the spoil of war. The two passages in the play on which this view is based are inconclusive. *Ἔστι δὲ καὶ πολέμου τετρομένοισ βωμὸς ἀρῆς φηγάσιν ῥῦμα* (83-85) may simply be an argument *a fortiori*; the Danaids have an even better claim for protection than the conquered in war. In *γένος μάχης τ' ἀπληστον καὶ λέγω πρὸς εἰδῶτα* (741-742), we have, in all probability, merely another reference to the suitors' lustful violence.

H. N. Couch ('The Loathing of the Danaids,' *Proc. Am. Philol. Assoc.*, LXIII (1932), liv) has argued that the attitude of the Danaids is to be explained as arising from the conflict of Greek and barbarian cultures, the persistence of Greek tradition in a barbarian environment being symbolized by the Danaids. The opposition is undoubtedly felt in the play, but is subordinated to the conflict of *δίκη* and *ὑβρις*, of which it is a conspicuous example.

<sup>1</sup> 8, 38, 223-226, 337, 388. Cf. also 933, 983-984, 1053.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 225-226. There is no suggestion that cousin marriages were regarded as incestuous, as has sometimes been supposed (e.g., by P. Vinogradoff, *Outlines of Historical Jurisprudence*, II. 22). Cf. Murray, *op. cit.*, 15 f. More plausible is the view expressed by W. Ridgeway, *The Origin of Tragedy*, 190-197, that we have in the play a dramatization of the conflict between patrilinear and matrilinear systems of inheritance. The theory, however, has been rejected by later critics. Cf. Vürtheim, *op. cit.*, 92-94. The objections to the view are: (1) that, if Athenian law is under discussion, the Danaids do not as yet come under its provisions, as their father is still living; (2) that the suitors do not make any claim based on

Danaus reassures his daughters by pointing out that the suitors' landing will be a slow and difficult process, announces that he will go to obtain help, and leaves the stage. The chorus again give utterance to their fears in words compounded of a longing to find escape and peace, loathing of the insolent suitors, and trust in Zeus.

A herald of the Egyptian suitors now appears, an embodiment of *ὑβρις*, for *qualis dominus, talis servus*. With rude threats of violence, he orders the Danaids to the ships, incidentally taunting them with their lack of legal status in the city (853). With impassioned words the Danaids express their loathing of this violence and pray to the gods, provoking from the herald an outburst of impious insolence (894). Finally the chorus cry to the leaders of the land for help.

The king enters and rebukes the herald for his insolence. The latter first makes a show of asserting that he is within his legal rights in claiming his own that he has lost. The king replies that he does not know how to conduct himself as a foreigner, that he has not given information to his *πρόξενοι*, and that he is treating the gods of the country with sacrilege. The herald is driven to threaten violence, demands to know by whom he is defrauded, and then expresses contempt for legal proceedings; there will be bloodshed. The king replies that he may take the maidens only if argument persuades them to go willingly; such has been the resolution of the sovereign people. He bids the herald be gone, and then offers the Danaids the city's hospitality; he himself will be their protector. They invoke blessings upon their benefactors. These are echoed by their father, who now reappears. The rest of his speech reminds them of the necessity of modest demeanour, especially as they are foreigners. The implication is that they must continue to deserve the protection that they have won. For the

their relationship, but it is merely a possibility suggested by the king (387-389); (3) that the Danaids do not base their objections upon any principle of rights for heiresses, but only on their loathing of the suitors.

audience it is a last reminder of the contrast between the humble suppliants, seeking justice, and the lawless suitors.

The drama is ended. In the exodus, which no doubt serves as a transition to the next play of the trilogy, two ideas are developed alternately, repulsion to marriage with the suitors and reflections that it may after all prove inevitable. The final prayer returns to the theme of δίκη—

καὶ δίκη δίκας ἔπει-  
σθαι, ἔδν εὐχαῖς ἐμαῖς, λυπηρίοις  
μαχαναῖς θεοῦ πάρα.

In the play as a whole character and action are subordinated to the presentation of religious, political and social ideas; it thus furnishes an instance of Aristotle's observation that ancient writers represented characters speaking πολιτικῶς.<sup>1</sup>

H. G. ROBERTSON.

Victoria College,  
University of Toronto.

<sup>1</sup> Poet. 1450b 7.

### THE QUALITY OF ὄψις IN WORDS.

ARISTOTLE in his *Rhetoric* uses a cryptic phrase which, as far as I know, has received only casual notice from the commentators. He says (III. 2. § 14): τὰς δὲ μεταφορὰς ἐντεῦθεν οἰστέον ἀπὸ καλῶν ἢ τῇ φωνῇ ἢ τῇ δυνάμει ἢ τῇ ὄψει ἢ ἄλλῃ τινὶ αἰσθήσει—'the materials of metaphor must be beautiful to the ear, to the understanding, to the eye or some other physical sense' (Rhys Roberts). Cope in his edition of the *Rhetoric* understands τῇ ὄψει and ἄλλῃ τινὶ αἰσθήσει as mental images of things pleasing to sight, smell, taste, etc., i.e. ὄψις = the mind's eye. He ignores any other possible interpretation. That there is another possible interpretation is indisputable; whether it is perhaps as probable this article tentatively enquires.

It is no new suggestion that ὄψις here may mean the immediate visual impact of the shape and grouping of letters in words, that is, the effect of the look of words on the eye as φωνή is the effect of the sound of words on the ear.

To reconsider A.'s phrase in this light we must first recall the context. A. is enunciating an aesthetic criterion for the choice of words in metaphor. In § 13 of the same chapter he writes: κάλλος δὲ ὀνόματος, ὥσπερ Δικύμνιος λέγει, ἐν τοῖς ψόφοις ἢ τῷ σημαινομένῳ. It is significant that A. explicitly states—ὥσπερ Δικύμνιος λέγει—that this was the rule accepted before himself. He then, after a few typical semi-relevant remarks, enunciates his own more developed view, changing ψόφοις to φωνῇ as a better word for human utterance,

τῷ σημαινομένῳ το δυνάμει as more suitable for his theory of verbal ἐνέργεια, and adding his new development ὄψις and ἄλλαι αἰσθήσεις. If these mean no more than mental images of sensuous delights, as Cope holds, they are little more than tautological with δυνάμει—a feeble extension of Licymnius' orthodox view. Cope considered himself secure in taking this easy course because he could cite Demetrius in his favour as he thought. He also quotes Cicero. He might have added the Scholiasts, who are verbose but unoriginal on the matter. Also in the *Περὶ Ὑψους* 26. 2, τὴν ἀκοὴν ὄψιν ποιῶν unequivocally means 'by means of sounds (i.e. phonetic symbols, words) producing sight (i.e. images in the mind's eye).' But observe what Demetrius actually says (*Περὶ Ἑρμην.* § 173)—ὁρίσατο δ' αὐτὰ (sc. ὀνόματα καλά) Θεόφραστος οὕτως· κάλλος ὀνομάτων ἐστὶ τὸ πρὸς τὴν ἀκοὴν ἢ πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν ἡδύ, ἢ τὸ τῇ διανοίᾳ ἔντιμον. Now it is clear from Demetrius' examples that he took Theophrastus' words to mean what Cope asserts, i.e. ὄψις = visual images in the mind. But surely Theophrastus' words cannot bear this construction: there is a very marked grouping of πρὸς τὴν ἀκοὴν ἢ πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν ἡδύ—a hedonistic classification—against τὸ τῇ διανοίᾳ ἔντιμον—almost an ethical valuation. I think at least we may say that Theophrastus might have meant something different from what Demetrius and later commentators took ὄψις to mean.

But the term ὄψις seems to originate



with Aristotle, so to him let us return. He uses the word *ὄψις* frequently in his psychological and metaphysical studies—too often for the superficial reader to dogmatize upon its connotation. But in the *Rhetoric* it occurs, besides the quoted text, only three times. In I. 7. 1364<sup>a</sup> it means *the physical sensations of sight*, in II. 4. 1381<sup>b</sup> *the personal appearance*, and in III. 3. 1406<sup>a</sup> *the face*—these are, I think, fair translations, and at least this is certain that it is never used in the *Rhetoric* as a synonym for *ἐνάργεια* or the *πρὸ ὀμμάτων* quality of words, which are the terms used by A. and later for *a word's effect on the mind's eye*—Cope's idea of *ὄψις*.

The evidence of the *Poetics* is even more significant. *Ὅψις* occurs five times, always denoting *the spectacular elements in Tragedy*, i.e. the immediate visual effect of a stage production. More noteworthy still is that twice it is coupled exclusively with *μελοποιία* (1459<sup>b</sup> 10 and 1462<sup>a</sup> 16) and once with *μελοποιία* and *λέξις* (1449<sup>b</sup> 10); that is *the directly audible and visible embellishments* are grouped together just as in Theophrastus' *πρὸς τὴν ἀκοὴν ἢ πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν ἡδύ*.

Thus the use of *ὄψις* in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* gives no grounds for Cope's equation *ὄψις* = *ἐνάργεια* or *πρὸ ὀμμάτων* or *φαντασίαι*.

In exemplification of what I suggest *ὄψις* may mean I venture to quote a personal experience, hoping that others may have shared it. From my earliest acquaintance with Aeschylus the very shapes and groupings of the consonants in such lines as

*ἐφεψαλῶθι κάεβροντήθη σθένος* (P.V. 364) or  
*σμερδναῖσι γαμφηλαῖσι συρίζων φόβον* (P.V. 357)

conveyed to my eyes physically in a very terrible and real form the grim monstrosity and hideous fate which I only afterwards managed to extract from those *ὀνόματα τραχέα* by the harder process of construing. Granted that my text was printed in minuscule and not capitals—yet the impression still remains and illustrates *ὄψις*, as I understand it, fully for me.

Questions at once demand an answer. First: supposing that such an impression is not merely a product of fancy,

was this *ὄψις* merely a natural quality of Greek letters unconsciously and inevitably employed whenever words were aptly used, or was it consciously and deliberately exploited as an artistic device by Greek poets to add aesthetic charm to their work? Unless the latter, which includes the former, be true, our case for *ὄψις* in Aristotle is not worth maintaining.

Consider *ὄψις* as a *natural* quality in letters first. All will concede that a North American Indian or an early Egyptian hieroglyphist and other peoples who used 'picture-writing' or an iconic or even an ideographic script might have had a sense of *ὄψις* in words, for the shape of every character was significant visually of what it represented and meant. Even the *spoken* word to a writer of their language may have been significant of the *shape* of written words to them: thus *ὄψις* and *ἀκοή* were equally immediate in their languages. And even a highly cultured modern people, the Chinese, derive a very certain aesthetic (besides sensuous) pleasure from the *ὄψις*, i.e. the pictorial suggestions latent in the subtle brushwork of their word-characters. For example, a poem describing two herons flying across a stormy sky with a background of snowclad mountains (and it is consequent that so many of their poems are in terms of such simple imagery) has its aesthetic value enhanced by the delicate innuendoes of shape in the formation of the well-chosen and carefully painted script. Indeed I am told that this *ὄψις* is often more important than *ἀκοή* in Chinese poetry, for whereas the sounds of words differ from district to district, the shape of the characters is everywhere unchanged.

But, someone may remark with scorn, there is a world of cultures between the Chinese word-script and the very derivative alphabet of the Greeks: what did it signify to the ancient Athenian that *alpha* was originally an ox or *gimel* a camel?—either might have been a wombat or a duck-billed platypus for all Demos cared.

But a reference to the *Cratylus* of Plato must give us pause. Therein, in a discussion of the origins of letters,



he notes (426<sup>b</sup>), in ambiguous terms indeed but meant, I think, to be applied to our thesis, that I is used for τὰ λεπτά, O for τὸ στρογγύλον, while H and A are μεγάλα, and I believe that he cannot have intended their *sound* alone but *shape* as well. If so, his suggestions are a remarkable anticipation of Sir Richard Paget's highly convincing theory of the origin of human speech. He holds that words are mainly a development of primitive gestures imitative of both *sound* and *shape*: primitive man as well as copying sound with vocal sounds also copied shapes by mimicking them with configurations of his mouth, vocal chords and larynx. Thus the pronunciation of ᾠόν 'an egg' needs the formation of a large circle, omega, and a small circle, omicron, thus reproducing something like the essential shape elements in an egg—a large sphere tapering into a smaller sphere. This may seem too good to be true, but neither Plato's arguments nor Paget's can be lightly set aside. Here is evidence for a universal sense of ὄψις even in the spoken word, and if true it can easily be applied to written characters.

As a change from these very general suggestions of a natural ὄψις even in so abstract an alphabet as the Greek, here is certain evidence for an *artistic* use of ὄψις even in our own most formalized Roman type. Most elementary is this (from Mr. E. E. Cumming's *No Thanks*, published in 1935)—

'mOOOn Over tOWns mOOOn.'

How much subtler the inversion of it in Musset's *Ballade à la lune*—

'C'était dans la nuit brune  
Sur le clocher jauni  
La lune  
Comme un point sur un i.'

Or again observe M. Paul Valéry's use of capitals (in *Le Cimetière Marin*)

'Eau sourcilleuse, Œil qui gardes en toi . . .'

Or, a slightly different aspect, one recalls that there are conservative lovers of poetry who will confess that Blake's

'Tyger, Tyger, burning bright . . .'

loses much if printed

'Tiger, Tiger, . . .'

Here is deliberate artifice in Roman

script. The question is, can and did the Greek script, occupying an intermediate stage between primitive and modern, bear such treatment?

A full investigation of this question would need more scholarship and more space than I can now command. Only a complete revision of all Greek literature in search of such optical effects could decide it. I offer the following merely as possibly relevant clues in the investigation.

#### CLASSICAL.

1. The ambiguities latent in the terms γράφω, γραφή, γράμμα, etc. For calligraphy see Freeman's *Schools of Hellas*, pp. 85-87.

2. The importance of shape and ὄψις in epigraphy.

3. What did Dionysius mean in the last epithet of the phrase (*de Comp.* 23) ὀνόματα καὶ λεῖα καὶ μαλακὰ καὶ παρθενωπά? (A trivial point, but we are snatching at straws for the present.)

4. An investigation of τὸ αἰσχροὺν in the ὄψις of words (see *Rhet.* III. 2. 13) as a complement to τὸ καλόν.

5. To search the Neo-Platonists for developments of the *Cratylus* theories.

6. Is the *shape* factor in symbolic letters, the Pythagorean T, the Christian X, relevant—ὄψις interpreted morally, not aesthetically?

7. Perhaps *shape-poems*, the technopaegnia of Alexandria (note the Egg) and the seventeenth century in England and elsewhere, denote an ὄψις in letter-grouping extended to word-grouping.

8. Aristotle in *Metaph.* xii. 3: 'The essential characters composing beauty are order, symmetry, and definiteness.'

9. Euripides: *Theseus* (fr. 385 Nauck).

10. A small but certain proof that a *friend and contemporary of Aristotle* was sensitive to ὄψις in letters is the image of Aeschion quoted by Tzetzes in Walz's *Rhetorici Graeci* III. 650, referring to the new moon—

μήνη τὸ καλὸν οὐρανοῦ νέον σίγμα

—'heaven's fair new letter C'—a perfect parallel to Musset's typographical description of the full moon quoted above.

#### MODERN.

1. *Literary*: Mallarmé seems to hint often at ὄψις in his discussion of *poésie*

pure. There must be other modern suggestions.

2. *Aesthetics*: modern experiments and theories of typography and calligraphy.

3. *Psychological*: such works as *The Experimental Study of Reading* by M. D. Vernon (Cambridge, 1931) or *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading* by E. B. Huey (New York, 1908) have ample evidence in general support of our thesis; even graphology, for all its quackeries, should offer some clues.

With such sketchy support I must leave my thesis. Objections simply hurl themselves against such a view of *ὄψις*, but I can find none which is utterly conclusive against it. One I must mention: what can *ἄλλη τιwὶ αἰσθήσει* mean? Aristotle can hardly have anticipated such aesthetic pleasure as a blind man today may enjoy when reading with his finger-tips well-designed Braille type. The phrase can hardly have been even a precautionary clause to embrace such unheard-of developments. But it is typical of A.'s style in the *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* to throw out the most pregnant suggestions without pausing to work out their full im-

plications. So here, yielding to the well-known tendency in Greek writers to add for the sake of antithesis or conceptual symmetry in an enumeration a final term whose significance cannot be pressed (it is a recognized *schema*, but its name eludes me), he goes the whole hog and adds *ἄλλη τιwὶ αἰσθήσει*—an esoteric hint to his pupils (amongst whom Theophrastus), as if to say 'You may investigate the further possibilities for yourselves,' just in case he had overlooked some other source of aesthetic beauty in words.

In conclusion: there is at least a possibility that if A. had troubled to dwell further on *ὄψις* in words, he might have arrived at much the same decision as on *ὄψις* in Tragedy (*Poetics* 6. 1450<sup>b</sup> 17)—*ἡ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικὸν μὲν, ἀτεχνότατον δὲ καὶ ἥκιστα οἰκείον τῆς ποιητικῆς*—but yet not to be ignored.

And in self-defence may I quote Socrates (*Cratylus* 425D)? *γελοῖα μὲν οἶμαι φανείσθαι . . . γράμμασι καὶ συλλαβαῖς τὰ πρᾶγματα μεμνημένα κατάδηλα γινώμενα, ὁμῶς δὲ ἀνάγκη*—the latter phrase applies *ἀνδρὶ γούν τῷδε*.

W. BEDELL STANFORD.

Trinity College, Dublin.

#### VIRGIL, AEN. VIII. 65.

hic mihi magna domus, celsis caput urbibus exit.

AENEAS with his ships has entered the mouth of the Tiber (VII. 29 sqq.) and an encampment has been built on the river-bank (VII. 157 sqq.). After the declaration of war by the Latins, the god of the river appears to Aeneas in a vision by night, acquaints him with the future, gives reassuring advice, and finally reveals himself, ending with these words: 'Here is my stately home: my fountain-head is among high cities' (Mackail).

I have always regarded this as the better punctuation and rendering of a much-debated line. In support I venture to adduce a passage of the *Fasti* which, as far as I know, has not been mentioned by any editor of Virgil.

In *Fasti* IV. 329-330 Ovid is describing the journey of the Idaean mother up the Tiber from the sea to Rome. The boat has just entered the river and is approaching the first great crook

where (to one ascending the stream) the channel bends northwards:

fluminis ad flexum veniunt (*Tiberina priores atria dixerunt*) unde sinister abit.

It is at least a very remarkable coincidence that Ovid should give *Tiberina atria* as the ancient name of approximately the very spot at which Virgil's Tiber is made to say 'hic mihi magna domus.' And, in view of Virgil's anti-quarianism, I am tempted to suggest that the ancient name may have been in his mind when he wrote.

If this suggestion should prove acceptable, it will render unnecessary the other interpretation of the line as—'hic mihi magna domus, celsis caput urbibus, exit': 'here rises my great home, a capital over mighty cities.' Unnecessary too the *escit* (= *erit*), proposed *ἀρχαϊκῶς* by Faber (ad Lucr. II. 1145) and mentioned with distrust by Heinsius (*ingeniose profecto, sed utinam et vere*).

W. H. SEMPLE.

University of Reading.

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